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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. JOLLY).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
December 8, 2015.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DAVID W. JOLLY to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 6, 2015, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

SUPPORTING THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF OUR SOLDIERS AND VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, late last month President Barack Obama signed into law the National Defense Authorization Act of 2015, otherwise known as the NDAA.

Included in the legislation was language directing the United States Department of Defense to study a mental health assessment for all incoming

military recruits. This assessment would then be used as a baseline throughout the service careers of our servicemen and -women.

This was included in the Medical Evaluation Parity for Servicemembers, or MEPS, Act, which I introduced earlier this year. Now, I believe this assessment is essential in addressing the suicide epidemic which has affected our military members and veterans over the past several years.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to suicide within the ranks of our American heroes, commissioned studies have been implemented by the Department of Defense in the past.

We have found that, for over 60 percent of those individuals who attempt or commit suicide while serving in the military, it was not their first attempt. Their first attempt was before they joined the military. This is about pre-existing conditions that have failed to have been recognized.

Mr. Speaker, if you are like me and you assume that it is what people see on the battlefield—I have been to Afghanistan. I have been to Iraq in the past. It is the horrors of war that drive people, largely, to suicide.

But these studies, Mr. Speaker, have found that the large majority of those individuals who attempt or commit suicide while in the military never saw deployment. They were not in combat situations. Again, it speaks to pre-existing conditions that have not been adequately identified and addressed. This is a matter that really has been thoroughly examined in recent years.

So while I am happy that it is in the National Defense Authorization Act, I urge the Pentagon to act quickly to take steps to better assess the mental health of our servicemen and -women at the time of enlistment with this commonsense, baseline evaluation.

These heroes deserve all the information that we can provide in order to make their lives a bit easier.

CONGRATULATING THE PORTLAND, OREGON, TIMBERS ON THEIR MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER CUP VICTORY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor this morning barely able to talk. But not having much of a voice is common in Portland, Oregon, these days, as fans shouted themselves hoarse after the Portland Timbers' stunning victory over the Columbus Crew on Sunday, winning the Major League Soccer Cup.

There is no doubt that my hometown of Portland, Oregon, is Soccer City, USA. Fans continue to prove the point with a huge celebration today.

I want to congratulate the Timbers for an amazing season and for being such a huge part, indeed, of Portland, and all of Oregon.

This season had it all: injuries and bumps along the way that made Sunday's result seem highly unlikely. But under the leadership and direction of Coach Caleb Porter, the Timbers stayed focused and made course corrections that led them to a national championship, finishing with a flourish.

This team has so many heroes that it is impossible, in the time I have, to give them their due recognition. But I want to give special mention to new U.S. citizen Darlington Nagbee; Diego Chara; Rodney Wallace; Jake Gleason; and the old, salty dog, Jack Jewsbury, all of whom have been with the Timbers since our inaugural season.

I also want to highlight the Maestro, Diego Valeri; defenders Liam Ridgeway and Nat Borchers, he of the beard; as well as goalkeeper Adam Kwarasay for their heroic efforts this season.

Merritt Paulson and his management team deserve recognition for their passion for the support and their love for our city.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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